WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for finding a path in a network, wherein said network comprises a plurality of nodes and a plurality of links and each one of said plurality of nodes is coupled to at least one other of said plurality of nodes by at least one of said plurality of links, comprising:

generating at least one path cost data set, said path cost data set representing a path cost between a root node of said nodes and destination node of said nodes, wherein said path begins at said root node and ends at said destination node; and

accessing said at least one path cost data set wherein

said generating and said accessing are performed in such a manner that a minimum-hop path and a minimum-cost path can be determined from said at least one path cost data set,

said minimum-hop path represents a path between said root node and said destination node having a minimum number of hops, and

said minimum-cost path represents a path between said root node and said destination node having a minimum cost.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

storing said at least one path cost data set in a path storage area such that said at least one path cost data set can be accessed to determine said minimum-hop path and said minimum-cost path.

3. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

allocating said path storage area in a data structure that facilitates said access to determine said minimum-hop path and said minimum-cost path.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

storing said at least one path cost data set in a data structure, wherein

said data structure is a two-dimensional array of entries arranged in a plurality of rows and a plurality of columns,

each one of said rows in said data structure corresponds to one of said plurality of nodes, and

each one of said columns in said data structure corresponds to a given hop count.

5. The method of claim 4, further comprising:

determining said minimum-hop path to said destination node by:

traversing a one of said rows corresponding to said destination node from a first column of said columns to a second column of said columns, and

storing path information representing said minimum-hop path while traversing said data structure from said second column to said first column, said second column being a first one of said columns encountered when traversing said one of said rows from said first column to said second column having non-default cost entry.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein said first column corresponds to said root node.

7. The method of claim 4, further comprising:

determining said minimum-cost path to said destination node by:

identifying a minimum-cost column of said columns, said minimum-cost column having a lowest cost entry of all of said columns in a one of said rows corresponding to said destination node, and

storing path information representing said minimum-cost path while traversing said data structure from said minimum-cost column to a first column of said columns.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein said first column corresponds to said root node.

9. A method of finding a path in a network comprising:

creating a path table, wherein:

said path table comprises a first number of rows and a second number of columns,

said network comprises a plurality of nodes and a plurality of links,

each one of said plurality of nodes is coupled to at least one other of said plurality of nodes by at least one of said plurality of links, and

said path begins at a root node of said plurality of nodes;

processing each row in a first column of said second number of columns, said processing each row in said first column of said second number of columns resulting in said first column containing corresponding first connectivity information; and

processing each remaining column, wherein

said each remaining column is a one of said second number of columns other than said first column, and

said processing each remaining column resulting in said first column containing corresponding subsequent connectivity information

10. The method of claim 9, wherein said processing said each row in said first column of said second number of columns comprises:

for said each row in said first column of said second number of columns,

wherein a selected node of said plurality of nodes corresponds to said row in said first column,

if said selected node is a neighbor of said root node,

storing a first link cost in a first cost entry, wherein

said first link cost is a link cost of a first one of said plurality of links,

said first one of said plurality of links is between said root node and said selected node, and

said first cost entry is a cost entry of said row in said first column,
storing a root node identifier in a first previous node entry,
wherein said root node identifier represents said root node and said first previous node entry is a previous node entry of said row in said first column, and
storing a node identifier representing said selected node in a storage area,
else,
storing a maximum cost value in said first cost entry, and
storing a null value in said first previous node entry.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein said processing said each remaining column comprises:
for said each remaining column,
if said storage area is not empty,
copying each row of a preceding column to a corresponding row of said remaining column, said preceding column being a one of said second number of columns other than said remaining column,
for each stored node identifier, said stored node identifier being stored in said storage area and corresponding to a current node of said plurality of nodes,
removing said stored node identifier from said storage area,
for each neighboring node, said neighboring node being a neighbor of said current node,
adding a neighboring link cost to a preceding path cost in order to yield an alternate path cost, wherein
said neighboring link cost is a link cost of a second one of said plurality of links, said second one of said plurality of links being between said current node and said neighboring node, and

said preceding path cost is a cost value stored in a cost entry of a row of said preceding column, said row of said preceding column corresponding to said current node,

if said alternate path cost is less than a cost value stored in a current cost entry,

storing said alternate path cost in said current cost entry, said current cost entry being a cost entry of a row of said remaining column, said row of said remaining column corresponding to said neighboring node,

storing a node identifier representing said current node in a previous node entry of said row of said remaining column, and

storing a node identifier representing said neighboring node in said storage area.

12. The method of claim 11, further comprising:

identifying said root node, wherein said root node stores a topology database comprising:

connectivity information regarding which ones of said plurality of nodes are coupled to which other ones of said plurality of nodes, and

a link cost for each one of said plurality of links.

13. The method of claim 12, further comprising:

generating said topology database by:

for each one of said plurality of nodes,

identifying, at least one neighboring node that is a neighbor of said each one of said plurality of nodes and at least one neighboring link that couples said at least one neighboring node to said each one of said plurality of nodes, wherein said plurality of nodes includes said at

least one neighboring node and said plurality of links includes said at least one neighboring link,

determining a link cost for each one of said at least one neighboring link, and

storing said link cost at said each one of said plurality of nodes; and

distributing said connectivity information for each one of said plurality of nodes to other of said plurality of nodes.

14. The method of claim 13, wherein said link cost is a physical length of a corresponding one of said plurality of links.

15. The method of claim 13, wherein said link cost is a bandwidth of a corresponding one of said plurality of links.

16. The method of claim 11, wherein said first number is equal to a number of nodes in said plurality of nodes.

17. The method of claim 11, wherein each one of said second number of columns corresponds to a number of hops.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein said number of hops is equal to a maximum number of hops.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein said maximum number of hops is a maximum number of hops possible when using said method.

20. The method of claim 18, wherein said maximum number of hops is a maximum number of hops selected by a user.

21. The method of claim 11, wherein said each neighboring node is one of said plurality of nodes that is a neighbor of said current node.

22. The method of claim 11, wherein said stored node identifier is already stored in said storage area at a time when processing of said remaining column is begun.

23. The method of claim 11, wherein said preceding path cost is a cost of a path between said root node and said current node.

24. The method of claim 11, wherein said storage area is a queue.

25. The method of claim 11, further comprising:

selecting a destination node from said plurality of nodes, said destination node being a one of said plurality of nodes other than said root node; and

determining a minimum number of hops between said root node and said destination node by

setting said minimum number of hops to one, and

for each one of said second number of columns, incrementing said minimum number of hops by one if a cost entry in a row of said one of said second number of columns is equal to said maximum cost value, said row of said one of said second number of columns corresponding to said destination node.

26. The method of claim 11, further comprising:

selecting a destination node from said plurality of nodes, said destination node being a one of said plurality of nodes other than said root node; and

determining a minimum cost of said path, said path being between said root node and said destination node, by searching a one of said first number of rows corresponding to said destination node for a one of said second number of columns having a smallest cost entry of cost entries of said second number of columns in said one of said first number of rows.

27. The method of claim 11, wherein each one of said first number of rows corresponds to a one of said plurality of nodes.

28. The method of claim 11, wherein each one of said second number of columns corresponds to a corresponding number of hops from said root node and said second number of columns is arranged in a monotonically increasing order with regard to said number of hops.

29. The method of claim 27, wherein said preceding column corresponds to a number of hops that is one hop less than a number of hops corresponding to said remaining column.

30. The method of claim 28, further comprising:

selecting a destination node from said plurality of nodes, said destination node being a one of said plurality of nodes other than said root node; and

determining a minimum number of hops between said root node and said destination node by

counting a number of columns from said first column to a first non-maximum-cost column, inclusive, said first non-maximum-cost column being a first one of said second number of columns for which a cost entry in a one of said first number of rows corresponding to said destination node is not said maximum cost value.

31. The method of claim 28, further comprising:

selecting a destination node from said plurality of nodes, said destination node being a one of said plurality of nodes other than said root node;

storing a destination node identifier in said path storage area, said destination node identifier representing said destination node;

setting a current node identifier to said destination node identifier; and

for each intermediate column, proceeding from a first non-maximum-cost column to said first column, wherein

said intermediate column is a one of said second number of columns between said first column and said first non-maximum-cost column, inclusive, and

said first non-maximum-cost column is a first one of said second number of columns, when proceeding from said first column to said first non-maximum-cost column, for which a cost entry in a row corresponding to said destination node is not said maximum cost value,

storing, in said path storage area, a previous node identifier stored in a previous node entry of a row of said intermediate column, wherein said row of said intermediate column corresponds to a one of said plurality of nodes represented by said current node identifier, and

setting a current node identifier to said previous node identifier.

32. The method of claim 28, further comprising:

selecting a destination node from said plurality of nodes, said destination node being a one of said plurality of nodes other than said root node;

storing a destination node identifier in said path storage area, said destination node identifier representing said destination node;

setting a current node identifier to said destination node identifier;

searching a one of said first number of rows corresponding to said destination node for a minimum path-cost column, wherein

said minimum path-cost column is a one of said second number of columns having a smallest cost entry of said second number of columns in said one of said first number of rows; and

for each intermediate column, proceeding from said minimum path-cost column to said first column, wherein said intermediate column is a one of said second number of columns between said first column and said minimum path-cost column, inclusive,

storing, in said path storage area, a previous node identifier stored in a previous node entry of a row of said intermediate column,

wherein said row of said intermediate column corresponds to a one of said plurality of nodes represented by said current node identifier, and

setting a current node identifier to said previous node identifier.

33. The method of claim 11, wherein said link cost is a physical length of a corresponding one of said each one of said at least one neighboring links.

34. The method of claim 11, wherein said link cost is a bandwidth a corresponding one of said each one of said at least one neighboring links is configured to carry.

35. The method of claim 11, wherein:

said storing said node identifier representing said current node in said previous node entry of said row of said remaining column further comprises:

storing a node identifier stored in a next node entry of said row of said preceding column in a next node entry of said row of said remaining column; and

said method further comprises:

for each row in said first column,

if said corresponding node is a neighbor of said root node,

storing a node identifier representing said corresponding node in a first next node entry, wherein said first next node entry is a next node entry of said row in said first column, and

else,

storing a null value in said first next node entry.

36. A method of finding a path in a network comprising:

creating a path vector, wherein:

said path vector comprises a first number of rows,

said network comprises a plurality of nodes and a plurality of links,

each one of said plurality of nodes is coupled to at least one other of said plurality of nodes by at least one of said plurality of links, and

said path begins at a root node of said plurality of nodes;

for a first hop of a maximum number of hops, processing each row in said first number of rows for said first hop, a selected node of said plurality of nodes corresponding to said row;

for each remaining hop of said maximum number of hops, processing said each row in said first number of rows for said each remaining hop;

37. The method of claim 36, wherein said processing each row in said first number of rows for said first hop comprises:

for said first hop of said maximum number of hops,

for each row in said first number of rows, a selected node of said plurality of nodes corresponding to said row,

if said selected node is a neighbor of said root node,

storing a first link cost in a first cost entry, wherein

said first link cost is a link cost of a first one of said plurality of links,

said first one of said plurality of links is between said root node and said selected node, and

said first cost entry is a cost entry of said row, and

storing a node identifier representing said selected node in a storage area,

else

storing a maximum cost value in said first cost entry.

38. The method of claim 37, wherein said processing said each row in said first number of rows for said each remaining hop comprises:

for said each remaining hop of said maximum number of hops,

if said storage area is not empty,

for each stored node identifier, said stored node identifier being stored in said storage area and representing a current node of said plurality of nodes, removing said stored node identifier from said storage area,

for each neighboring node, said neighboring node being a neighbor of said current node,

adding a neighboring link cost to a preceding path cost in order to yield an alternate path cost, wherein

said neighboring link cost is a link cost of a second one of said plurality of links, said second one of said plurality of links being between said current node and said neighboring node, and

said preceding path cost is a cost value stored in a cost entry of a row of said first number of rows corresponding to said current node,

if said alternate path cost is less than a cost value stored in a current cost entry,

storing said alternate path cost in said current cost entry, said current cost entry being a cost entry of a row of said first number of rows corresponding to said neighboring node,

storing a node identifier representing said current node in a previous node entry of said row of said first number of rows corresponding to said neighboring node, and

storing a node identifier representing said neighboring node in said storage area.

39. The method of claim 38, wherein said first number is equal to a number of nodes in said plurality of nodes.

40. The method of claim 38, wherein said first maximum number of hops is a maximum number of hops possible in said network.

41. The method of claim 38, wherein said maximum number of hops is a maximum number of hops selected by a user.

42. The method of claim 38, wherein said each neighboring node is a one of said plurality of nodes that is a neighbor of said current node.

43. The method of claim 38, wherein said stored node identifier is already stored in said path storage area at a time when processing of said remaining column is begun.

44. The method of claim 38, wherein said preceding path cost is a cost of a path between said root node and said current node.

45. The method of claim 38, wherein said storage area is a queue.

46. A computer system comprising:

a processor coupled to a network, wherein said network comprises a plurality of nodes and a plurality of links and each one of said plurality of nodes is coupled to at least one other of said plurality of nodes by at least one of said plurality of links;

computer readable medium coupled to said processor; and

computer code, encoded in said computer readable medium, configured to cause said processor to find a path in said network by virtue of being configured to cause said processor to:

generate at least one path cost data set, said path cost data set representing a path cost between a root node of said nodes and destination node of said nodes, wherein said path begins at said root node and ends at said destination node; and

access said at least one path cost data set wherein said generating and said accessing are performed in such a manner that a minimum-hop path and a minimum-cost

path can be determined from said at least one path cost data set,

said minimum-hop path represents a path between said root node and said destination node having a minimum number of hops, and

said minimum-cost path represents a path between said root node and said destination node having a minimum cost.

47. The computer system of claim 46, wherein said computer code is further configured to cause said processor to:

store said at least one path cost data set in a path storage area such that said at least one path cost data set can be accessed to determine said minimum-hop path and said minimum-cost path.

48. The computer system of claim 47, wherein said computer code is further configured to cause said processor to:

allocate said path storage area in a data structure that facilitates said access to determine said minimum-hop path and said minimum-cost path.

49. The computer system of claim 46, wherein said computer code is further configured to cause said processor to:

store said at least one path cost data set in a data structure, wherein

said data structure is a two-dimensional array of entries arranged in a plurality of rows and a plurality of columns,

each one of said rows in said data structure corresponds to one of said plurality of nodes, and

each one of said columns in said data structure corresponds to a given hop count.

50. The computer system of claim 49, wherein said computer code is further configured to cause said processor to:

determine said minimum-hop path to said destination node by virtue of being configured to cause said processor:

traverse a one of said rows corresponding to said destination node from a first column of said columns to a second column of said columns, and

store path information representing said minimum-hop path while traversing said data structure from said second column to said first column, said second column being a first one of said columns encountered when traversing said one of said rows from said first column to said second column having non-default cost entry.

51. The computer system of claim 50, wherein said first column corresponds to said root node.

52. The computer system of claim 49, wherein said computer code is further configured to cause said processor to:

determine said minimum-cost path to said destination node by virtue of being configured to cause said processor:

identify a minimum-cost column of said columns, said minimum-cost column having a lowest cost entry of all of said columns in a one of said rows corresponding to said destination node, and

store path information representing said minimum-cost path while traversing said data structure from said minimum-cost column to a first column of said columns.

53. The computer system of claim 52, wherein said first column corresponds to said root node.

54. A computer program product for finding a path in said network, wherein said network comprises a plurality of nodes and a plurality of links and each one of said plurality of nodes is coupled to at least one other of said plurality of nodes by at least one of said plurality of links and said computer program product is encoded in computer readable media and comprising:

a first set of instructions, executable on a computer system, configured to generate at least one path cost data set, said path cost data set representing a path cost between a root node of said nodes and destination node of said nodes, wherein said path begins at said root node and ends at said destination node; and

a second set of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to access said at least one path cost data set wherein

said generation and said access are performed in such a manner that a minimum-hop path and a minimum-cost path can be determined from said at least one path cost data set,

said minimum-hop path represents a path between said root node and said destination node having a minimum number of hops, and

said minimum-cost path represents a path between said root node and said destination node having a minimum cost.

55. The computer program product of claim 54, further comprising:

a third set of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to store said at least one path cost data set in a path storage area such that said at least one path cost data set can be accessed to determine said minimum-hop path and said minimum-cost path.

56. The computer program product of claim 55, further comprising:

a fourth set of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to allocate said path storage area in a data structure that facilitates said access to determine said minimum-hop path and said minimum-cost path.

57. The computer program product of claim 54, further comprising:

a third set of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to

store said at least one path cost data set in a data structure, wherein

said data structure is a two-dimensional array of entries arranged in a

plurality of rows and a plurality of columns,

each one of said rows in said data structure corresponds to one of said

plurality of nodes, and

each one of said columns in said data structure corresponds to a given

hop count.

58. The computer program product of claim 57, further comprising:

a fourth set of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to

determine said minimum-hop path to said destination node, said fourth

set of instructions comprising:

a first subset of instructions, executable on said computer system,

configured to traverse a one of said rows corresponding to said

destination node from a first column of said columns to a

second column of said columns, and

a second subset of instructions, executable on said computer system,

configured to store path information representing said

minimum-hop path while traversing said data structure from

said second column to said first column, said second column

being a first one of said columns encountered when traversing

said one of said rows from said first column to said second

column having non-default cost entry.

59. The computer program product of claim 58, wherein said first column corresponds to said root node.

60. The computer program product of claim 57, further comprising:

a fourth set of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to

a first subset of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to determine said minimum-cost path to said destination node, said fourth set of instructions comprising:

identify a minimum-cost column of said columns, said minimum-cost column having a lowest cost entry of all of said columns in a one of said rows corresponding to said destination node, and

a second subset of instructions, executable on said computer system, configured to store path information representing said minimum-cost path while traversing said data structure from said minimum-cost column to a first column of said columns.

61. The computer program product of claim 60, wherein said first column corresponds to said root node.

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